most powerful weapon in the army of the belligerents.

As long as Britain kept her rule over the waves, neither she nor her Allies could be beaten by any shortage of food or essential material for waging war. On the other hand, the Central Powers could not win if they were cut off from the resources of the great world outside. It was a ruthless calculation, but war is organised cruelty. Those who think they can restrict its barbarities will find in the end that savagery is of its essence and that civilised warfare only means that men have changed the instruments and methods of torture. The sum total of the agony inflicted on mankind by war was never as great as it proved to be in the World War of 1914-18. Men, women and children all suffered the horrors of war. The deaths behind the fighting lines owing to the effects of underfeeding and bad feeding were more numerous than those of the slain in the stricken field.

When Verdun and the Somme had both failed to achieve a military decision, the belligerents were confronted with a war of starvation. For us the most serious and urgent element in this situation was that of our dwindling shipping resources. The sea was the jugular vein of Allied vitality. Once that were cut

Burdens on our shipping

the Allied strength would soon be drained of its life blood. To quote a contemporary report submitted to the War Cabinet in the first days of its deliberations : " The whole cause of

the Allies depends upon the maintenance of sea power. The communications of the Armies in the East and West can only be carried out by sea, and nearly every one of the Allies at the present moment depends upon sea-borne supplies not only for the Armies themselves.